

Contributing to scholarship: Preparing and submitting conference paper abstracts and presentations

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Outline:

- A little about me
- Choosing a conference
- What do I have to contribute?
- Creating the abstract/paper and submitting for consideration
- During the session – engaging in dialogue and review
- General tips
- Helpful links to check out

A little about me:

- I am a second year PhD candidate in the faculty of education
- I completed my MA at Brock University in the area of historical and cultural geography
- I am a critical education researcher and conduct qualitative research
- My PhD research: First Nation, Métis, and Inuit education in Ontario's provincial schools

Choosing a conference:

- Why do you want to go?
 - Location, content, speakers, boost your CV, engage in dialogue with like minded or non-like minded people
- What is the conference topic (or range of topics)?
 - How does the call for papers relate to your work?

What can you contribute to the conference?

- Look at the call for papers – **more than once**
- Consider what the call asks for and what you have been working on:
 - Does the conference only want completed research, or can you present work on research in progress or in development, perhaps a literature review, a theoretical piece, or a consideration of methods
 - Be creative in thinking through how your work can contribute to the conference
- Being able to take works in progress (versus completed research) is essential to being able to present papers at conferences as a graduate student

Creating the abstract:

- Unless you are taking a paper you have already written (perhaps for a class, a research proposal, etc.) you will most likely be constructing your abstract without having a paper
 - For some this is opposite of their normal work flow
- Be clear, concise, and ensure the relevant information is included
 - Abstracts are usually 150-300 words – they are a great opportunity for you to work through what your paper is about, your argument, methods, and conclusions in a **concise manner**
 - Some conferences are different and require a more in depth application – CSSE, for example

Preparing your paper:

- Your paper presentation is more of a presentation than a traditional “paper”
- Many conferences frown upon delivering a paper by reading directly from the text (in fact CSSE officially discourages it in their outline of presenter responsibilities)
- Your paper presentation should be approached as you providing a **summary of the highlights** your paper
- http://www.csse-scee.ca/docs/conference/csse_conf_responsibilitiespresenters_enfr.pdf
- If you are at a conference where your paper will be included in the proceedings be sure to include all necessary components according to the conference requirements
 - Generally an abstract, introduction, research problem and question(s)/context, methodology, findings, conclusion, and references

During the session – engaging in dialogue and review

- Generally speaking a paper session includes three to five paper presentations
- The individual presentations can last **15 – 20 minutes** and there is usually **5 – 10 minutes allotted for discussion** per paper (times vary from conference to conference and depending on the session chair/conference the question time may occur at the end of each paper or at the end of all the presenters)

During the session – engaging in dialogue and review continued:

- **Prepare for the discussion** period as well – try to think through questions people may ask you and prepare some points of response to these
- These discussions are often wonderful opportunities to discuss your work and ideas with others who have similar research interests as you (or people who may not research in the area but came out of interest)
 - Have a piece of paper available to: take notes on the question asked of you (many are multi-part) and the discussion that results

General tips:

- Brainstorm a list of potential conference papers based on your current work and status in the program – pull from these as conference opportunities come up
- Start your abstract well before the submission deadline (even 150-300 words can be difficult)
- Work on your paper early and often – avoid jargon
- Practice your presentation for timing and pace
- Get together with colleagues/peers and edit each others papers **and slides**

General tips continued:

- Include your contact information on the final slide (allows people time to write it down during the question period)
- Don't have too many slides and don't put too much information on any given slide
- Make sure your font is readable (colour and size – generally not less than 20 pt) and that your background is not too overwhelming
- Example – [CSSE 2014](#) (based on my MA research)

Thanks!

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